

Precept®
Bible
Study
Method

Precept Bible Study Method

We believe that relationship with God comes through knowing His Word, and that means studying it hands-on. Precept's Method explains the nuts and bolts of our studies so that every student can discover God's truth for themselves.

These steps—observation, interpretation, application—are numbered for clarity, but it's important to remember that you don't have to use them in order. As you study, you should expect to move fluidly between steps and respond to the text as it is presented.



01

Observation



01 Begin with Prayer

Prayer is often the missing element in Bible study, and we can't overemphasize its importance. No matter how good your method or your tools, life-change and true understanding only come from God.

02 Ask the "5 W's and an H"

As you study any passage of Scripture, train yourself to constantly ask: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? These questions are the building blocks of precise observation, which is essential for accurate interpretation.

03 Mark key words and phrases

(see figure on page five)

A key word is one that is essential to the text. Key words and phrases are repeated in order to convey the author's point or purpose for writing. For example, notice that some form of the word suffering is used three times in 1 Peter 5. Key words can be marked using symbols, colors, or a combination of the two.

04 Make lists

Making lists can be one of the most enlightening things you do as you study. Lists reveal truths and highlight important concepts. 1 Peter 5:2,3, for example, contains a simple list regarding the role of the elder, shown by numbering the items in the text. It is also helpful to make a list of what you learn about each key word or person you mark.

Observation



- 05 Watch for contrasts and comparisons**
Contrasts and comparisons use highly descriptive language to make it easier to remember what you've learned. For example, Peter compares the devil to a roaring lion in verse 8. Peter also contrasts God's attitude toward the proud and the humble.
- 06 Note expressions of time**
The relationship of events in time often sheds light on the true meaning of the text. Marking them will help you see the sequence or timing of events and lead to accurate interpretation of Scripture.
- 07 Geographic Locations**
Often it's helpful to mark geographical locations, which tell you where an event takes place.
- 08 Mark terms of conclusion**
Words such as "therefore," "thus," and "for this reason" indicate that a conclusion or summary is being made.
- 09 Identify chapter themes**
The theme of a chapter will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that section of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by reviewing the key words and lists you developed. Try to express the theme as briefly as possible, using words found in the text.

Precept Marking Method

MARK KEY WORDS & SYNONYMS, SUCH AS GOD, CHRIST, DEVIL, & SUFFERING

IDENTIFY LISTS

MARK CONTRASTS

MARK TERMS OF CONCLUSION

MARK COMPARISONS

MARK EXPRESSIONS OF TIME

DOUBLE UNDERLINE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

1 Peter 5 — NASB

- 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the ~~sufferings~~ of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,
- 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;
- 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.
- 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,
- 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
- 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of ~~suffering~~ are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.
- 10 After you have ~~suffered~~ for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.
- 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- 12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!
- 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.
- 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

WITH EPISTLES, MARK AUTHOR & RECIPIENTS SEPARATELY

MAKE LISTS FROM KEY WORDS

Peter

1. exhorts the elders v.1
2. a fellow elder v.1
3. witness of Christ's sufferings v.1
4. partaker of the glory to be revealed v.1
5. regards Silvanus a faithful brother v.12
6. has written to them briefly v.12
7. calls Mark his son v.13

Interpretation



While observation leads to an accurate understanding of what the Word of God says, interpretation goes a step further and helps you understand what it means. As you seek to interpret the Bible accurately, the following guidelines will be helpful:

02

Interpretation



01 **Remember that context rules.**

If you lay the solid foundation of observation, you will be prepared to consider each verse in the light of the surrounding verses, the book in which it is found, and the entire Word of God. As you study, ask yourself: Is my interpretation of this passage of Scripture consistent with the theme, purpose, and structure of the book in which it is found? Is it consistent with other Scripture about the same subject? Am I considering the historic and cultural context? Never take a Scripture out of its context to make it say what you want it to say. Discover what the author is saying; don't add to his meaning.

02 **Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.**

When you know God's Word thoroughly, you will not accept a teaching simply because someone has used one or two isolated verses to support it. You will be able to discern whether a teaching is biblical or not. Saturate yourself in the Word of God; it is your safeguard against wrong doctrine.

03 **Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture.**

Remember, all Scripture is inspired by God. Therefore, Scripture will never contradict itself. Sometimes, however, you may find it difficult to reconcile two seemingly contradictory truths taught in Scripture, such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Don't take a teaching to an extreme that God doesn't. Simply humble your heart in faith and believe what God says, even if you can't fully understand or reconcile it at the moment.

Interpretation



04 Don't base your convictions on an obscure passage of Scripture.

An obscure passage is one in which the meaning is unclear or not easily understood. Because these passages are difficult to understand even when proper principles of interpretation are used, they should not be used as a basis for establishing doctrine.

05 Interpret Scripture literally.

God spoke to us that we might know truth. Therefore, take the Word of God at face value—in its natural, normal sense. Look first for the clear teaching of Scripture, not a hidden meaning. Understand and recognize figures of speech and interpret them accordingly. Consider what is being said in the light of its literary style. For example, you will find more similes and metaphors in poetical and prophetic literature than in historical or biographical books. Interpret portions of Scripture according to their literary style. Some literary styles in the Bible are: Historical—Acts, Exodus; Prophetic—Revelation, Isaiah; Biographical—Luke; Didactic (teaching)—Romans; Poetic—Psalms; Epistle (letter)—2 Timothy; Proverbial—Proverbs

06 Look for the single meaning of the passage.

Always try to understand what the author had in mind when you interpret a portion of the Bible. Don't twist verses to support a meaning that is not clearly taught. Unless the author of a particular book indicates that there is another meaning to what he says, let the passage speak for itself.

03

Application



The first step in application is to find out what the Word of God says on any particular subject through accurate observation and correct interpretation of the text. Once you understand what the Word of God teaches, you are then obligated before God to accept that truth and to live by it.

Scripture will always teach what is right, show us where we are wrong, how to correct, and train us in right living; so that we are complete, fully equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Now put it all together & give it a try!



Precept Discovery Studies are free studies we offer to help you practice and learn the Precept Bible Study Method. The next two pages walk you through John 6:29-35 showing you how to mark the text and prompting you with questions to observe, interpret, and apply. Give it a try!

The Bread of Life

Precept® Discovery Study

First things first...

More than 5,000 people ate bread that was miraculously provided from a few loaves. Afterward, many sought Jesus, who told them they only seek Him because they ate the bread and were filled. That is, they wanted more of the same.

But Jesus tells them to seek a bread that doesn't perish, a bread He will give them if they believe in Him.

OBSERVE

- 1 Circle *bread*
- 2 Underline *believe(s)*
- 3 List from the text what you learn about bread from heaven.
- 4 What did you learn about *believe*? What is true for those who believe in Jesus?

APPLY

- 5 Contrast what the crowd wanted with what Jesus offers them.
- 6 What is the "true bread from heaven"?
- 7 How is wanting "more" a temptation for us?

WRAP IT UP:

Being human, our perspective on life is limited. When Israel was in the wilderness, they could see and taste the manna "from heaven." The people in Jesus' day were looking for something like that to believe Jesus. We, too, can be tempted to look for some "thing" to help us believe.

But Jesus said He is enough. He gave us Himself. We shouldn't want anything else in order to trust Him.

Decide and believe today that Jesus is the true bread from heaven, the bread of life, and you will never hunger.

John 6:29-35 ESV

- 29** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”
- 30** So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?”
- 31** “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”
- 32** Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.
- 33** “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”
- 34** They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”
- 35** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

To discover more about the Precept® Bible Study Method, sign up for a training workshop! The Essentials of the Precept Bible Study Method class is the perfect place to begin—learn more at training.precept.org!

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What makes Precept unique?

Method & Materials

The Precept Bible Study Method

teaches individuals to observe, interpret, and apply God's Word for their lives

Precept Resources

incorporate the PBSM and exist for every book of the Bible and experience level

Individual Study

Prayer

provides a foundation for learning as individuals invite the Holy Spirit to teach them

Bible Exploration

to discover God's Truth and build relationship with Him

Group Study

Skilled Leader

trained in leading transformative discussions

Group Discussion

to confirm and clarify individuals' understanding

Multiplication

involves seeking and encouraging new group members and their growth

Find a Precept group near you!

Visit **Precept.org/Find-A-Group**
today to find out more about local
Bible studies.